

What is Claimed is:

1. An interactive program guide system including user equipment with which an interactive television program guide is provided and which includes a video recorder and a television, comprising:

5                   means for receiving television program guide information for use in the interactive television program guide;

10                  means for selecting a program for recording from the interactive television program guide;

                     means for locking the selected program, wherein when the selected program is locked access to the selected program is blocked;

15                  means for displaying a message when the selected program becomes locked to ask the user whether to retain the recording selection;

                     means for receiving a response from the user that indicates whether the user desires to retain the recording selection; and

20                  means for unlocking the selected program and directing the video recorder to record the selected program when the response received from the user indicates that the user desires to retain the recording selection.

2. The interactive program guide system defined in claim 1 wherein the means for locking the selected program is performed by using blocking criteria.

3. The interactive program guide system defined in claim 2 wherein the blocking criteria is selected from the group consisting of program titles, ratings, channel numbers, time periods, content, and  
5 any combination thereof.

4. A method for using an interactive program guide system using user equipment with which an interactive television program guide is provided and  
5 which includes a video recorder and a television, comprising:

receiving television program guide information for use in the interactive television program guide;

10 selecting a program for recording from the interactive television program guide;

locking the selected program, wherein when the selected program becomes locked, access to the selected program is blocked;

15 displaying a message when the selected program becomes locked to ask the user whether to retain the recording selection;

receiving a response from the user that indicates whether the user desires to retain the recording selection; and

20 unlocking the selected program and directing the video recorder to record the selected program when the response received from the user indicates that the user desires to retain the recording  
25 selection.

5. The method defined in claim 4 wherein locking the selected program comprises allowing the user to set blocking criteria.

6. The method defined in claim 5 wherein the blocking criteria is selected from the group consisting of program titles, ratings, channel numbers, time periods, content, and any combination thereof.

7. An interactive program guide system including user equipment with which an interactive television program guide is provided and which includes a video recorder and a television, comprising:

5                   communications circuitry configured to receive television program guide information for use in the interactive television program guide;

                      display circuitry configured to display the interactive television program guide;

10                  control circuitry configured to (1) provide a user with an opportunity to select a program for recording from the interactive television program guide, (2) provide the user with an opportunity to lock the selected program, wherein when the user locks the  
15                  selected program, access to the selected program is blocked, (3) direct the display circuitry to display a message when the selected program becomes locked to ask the user whether to retain the recording selection, (4) process a user response that indicates whether the user  
20                  desires to retain the recording selection, and (5) unlock the selected program and direct the video recorder to record the selected program when the response received from the user indicates that the user desires to retain the recording selection.

8. The interactive program guide system defined in claim 7 wherein the control circuitry provides the user with the opportunity to lock the selected program based on blocking criteria.

9. The interactive program guide system defined in claim 8 wherein the blocking criteria is selected from the group consisting of program titles, ratings, channel numbers, time periods, content, and  
5 any combination thereof.

10. A machine-readable medium for implementing an interactive television program guide comprising machine program logic recorded thereon for:

receiving television program guide  
5 information for use in an interactive television program guide;  
providing a user with an opportunity to select a program for recording from the interactive television program guide;

10 locking the selected program, wherein when the selected program becomes locked, access to the selected program is blocked;

displaying a message when the selected program becomes locked to ask the user whether to  
15 retain the recording selection;

receiving a response from the user that indicates whether the user desires to retain the recording selection; and

unlocking the selected program and  
20 directing a video recorder to record the selected program when the response received from the user indicates that the user desires to retain the recording selection.

11. The machine-readable medium defined in  
claim 10 further comprising machine program logic  
recorded thereon for locking the selected program  
wherein the locking the selected program comprises  
5 allowing the user to set blocking criteria.

12. The machine-readable medium defined in  
claim 11 further comprising machine program logic  
recorded thereon for allowing the user to set blocking  
criteria wherein the blocking criteria is selected from  
5 the group consisting of program titles, ratings,  
channel numbers, time periods, content, and any  
combination thereof.

13. An interactive program guide system  
including user equipment with which an interactive  
television program guide is provided and which includes  
a video recorder and a television, comprising:  
5

means for receiving television program  
guide information for use in the interactive television  
program guide;

10 means for selecting a program for  
recording from the interactive television program  
guide;

means for determining whether a user is  
interested in locking programs;

15 means for displaying a message when the  
user is interested in locking programs and a program  
has been selected for recording, asking the user  
whether to override program locks during the recording;

means for receiving a response from the  
user that indicates whether the user desires to  
override program locks during the recording; and

20                   means for unlocking the selected program if it is locked and directing the video recorder to record the selected program when the response received from the user indicates that the user desires to override program locks during the recording.

14. The interactive program guide system defined in claim 13 wherein the means for determining whether a user is interested in locking programs comprises means for determining whether a parental 5 control number has been created.

15. A method for using an interactive program guide system using user equipment with which an interactive television program guide is provided and which includes a video recorder and a television, 5 comprising:

                  receiving television program guide information for use in the interactive television program guide;

10                selecting a program for recording from the interactive television program guide;

                  determining whether a user is interested in locking programs;

15                displaying a message when the user is interested in locking programs and a program has been selected for recording, asking the user whether to override program locks during the recording;

                  receiving a response from the user that indicates whether the user desires to override program locks during the recording; and

20                   unlocking the selected program if it is locked and directing the video recorder to record the selected program when the response received from the user indicates that the user desires to override program locks during the recording.

16. The method defined in claim 15 wherein the determining whether a user is interested in locking programs comprises determining whether a parental control number has been created.

17. An interactive program guide system including user equipment with which an interactive television program guide is provided and which includes a video recorder and a television, comprising:

5                   communications circuitry configured to receive television program guide information for use in the interactive television program guide;

10                  control circuitry configured to (1) provide a user with an opportunity to select a program for recording from the interactive television program guide, (2) determine whether a user is interested in locking programs, (3) direct display circuitry to display a message when the user is interested in locking programs and a program has been selected for recording, asking the user whether to override program locks during the recording, (4) process a user response that indicates whether the user desires to override program locks during the recording, and (5) unlock the selected program if it is locked and direct a video recorder to record the selected program when the response from the user indicates that the user desires to override program locks during the recording.

18. The interactive program guide system defined in claim 17 wherein the control circuitry determines whether a user is interested in locking programs by determining whether a parental control 5 number has been created.

19. A machine-readable medium for implementing an interactive television program guide comprising machine program logic recorded thereon for:

receiving television program guide 5 information for use in the interactive television program guide;

providing a user with an opportunity to select a program for recording from the interactive television program guide;

10 determining whether a user is interested in locking programs;

displaying a message when the user is interested in locking programs and a program has been selected for recording, asking the user whether to 15 override program locks during the recording;

receiving a response from the user that indicates whether the user desires to override program locks during the recording; and

unlocking the selected program if it is 20 locked and directing a video recorder to record the selected program when the response received from the user indicates that the user desires to override program locks during the recording.

20. The machine-readable medium defined in  
claim 19 further comprising machine program logic  
recorded thereon for determining whether a user is  
interested in locking programs by determining whether a  
5 parental control number has been created.